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## Letter dated 10 April 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to attach herewith a letter dated 10 April 2012 from Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian crisis (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council as a matter of urgency.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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## Annex

I would like to update the Security Council on my mission as Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian crisis. I do so in the context of the 10 and 12 April timeline. We enter a critical moment in the implementation of the six-point plan, and I am gravely concerned at the course of events.

As I reported to the Security Council on 2 April, the Syrian Government had informed me the previous day that it would implement a plan for withdrawing its military units from populated zones and surrounding areas to take effect from 1 to 10 April 2012, with no new deployments to population centres. I subsequently relayed to all sides that upon the completion by the Government of its commitments under item 2 of the plan by Tuesday, 10 April, all parties should immediately cease all forms of violence, so that a complete cessation is in place by 0600 hours Damascus time on Thursday, 12 April. I appreciated the Council's support for this timeline in its presidential statement of 5 April, further to its support for the six-point plan in its presidential statement of 21 March.

In this regard, the days before 10 April should have been an opportunity for the Government to send a powerful political signal of peace, with action on all aspects of the six-point plan, in particular through the urgent and visible implementation of its commitments under item 2 of the plan, namely, to cease troop movements towards population centres, to cease all use of heavy weapons in such centres and to begin the pullback of military concentrations in and around population centres. In the past five days it has become clear that such a signal has yet to be issued.

With respect to humanitarian access, discussions are ongoing regarding an expansion of humanitarian access and capacity to reach the estimated 1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Following participation in the Government-led humanitarian assessment mission in March, the United Nations, in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, is now delivering assistance to displaced persons in Tartous governorate.

With respect to detainees, on 5 April the International Committee of the Red Cross announced that they had agreed to procedures with the Government for visits to places of detention, including an immediate visit to Aleppo Central Prison. In a letter dated 8 April, the Government informed me of the release of 97 people detained for participating in opposition activities. The Government has also informed me of the pardon of 211 individuals who had surrendered.

With respect to journalists, the Syrian Government has sent me a letter, informing me of the attribution of visas to journalists from 21 international news organizations.

With respect to the military provisions of the six-point plan, the Syrian Government has underlined security issues in several letters detailing actions by armed groups against Government forces, civilians and property. As for its own commitments, it has informed me of some military movements. According to the communications addressed to me, Syrian armed forces withdrew some units from the city of Idlib, the Zabadani area as well as from positions in the governorates of Dar'a on 5 and 6 April and from Dayr az Zawr on 7 and 8 April.

Despite these assurances from the Syrian Government, credible reports indicate that during that same period, Syrian armed forces conducted rolling military operations, characterized by troop movements, supported by artillery fire, in population centres. While some troops and heavy weapons have been withdrawn from some localities, this appears to be often limited to a repositioning of heavy weapons that keeps cities within firing range. Furthermore, several new localities also appear to have been subject to military operations, including the use of heavy weapons on population centres.

While the absence of United Nations observers makes it difficult to fully ascertain the situation on the ground, the rapid increase of refugee flows into Turkey gives a strong indication of a surge in violence. Between 15 December 2011 and 31 March 2012, the average rate of refugees entering Turkey was 96 persons per day. By contrast, the average rate of incoming refugees in the past nine days has been 707 persons per day. The spike is unquestionable, and of the greatest concern, given the implications for the situation inside the country.

Finally, in a letter dated 8 April, the Syrian Government introduced new conditions for any full implementation of the plan: (a) written assurances that armed opposition groups are prepared to cease all violence; (b) immediate disarmament of armed groups; and (c) a commitment by regional countries that they would not finance or arm opposition groups.

These new Syrian requests constitute ex post facto requirements that are not part of the six-point plan that they agreed to implement. This puts at risk the cessation of violence in all its forms, which is so urgently needed and which must take place at 0600 on 12 April. I have, however, been advised by Foreign Minister Lavrov, following his meeting with Foreign Minister Al-Moallem, that the Syrian Government is no longer insisting on written guarantees, but would need me to assure that the other parties and Governments also accept the plan.

I remain of the view that every effort must be made to achieve a cessation of violence in all its forms on 12 April at 0600. We have been in close contact with the leaderships of the Syrian National Council, the Free Syrian Army, local coordination committees and other groups. We have engaged the whole spectrum of the opposition to explain what is required of them alongside the Government's implementation of its obligations. Members of the opposition have indicated to us, and publicly, that they would observe a cessation of all forms of violence provided that Syrian forces withdraw from cities.

Meanwhile, the United Nations team led by General Mood has worked closely with Syrian military authorities to start technical preparations for the potential deployment of observers to supervise and monitor a cessation of armed violence. Progress on technical issues appears to have been made but substantive differences have emerged. General Mood is returning to Geneva to report on his mission, and I should be in a position to provide the Security Council with more information on 12 April.

If the required political will is present and the implementation of the six-point plan can proceed as agreed, the cessation of violence on 12 April will need to be followed in short order by the deployment of an effective international monitoring mechanism. This will require quick action from the Security Council. This could

then create the necessary conditions for an inclusive political solution that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people.

But recent events are deeply concerning. The prevailing security and human rights situation is unacceptable. This crisis has lasted for more than one year, has produced an intolerably heavy death toll and is now triggering increased flows of refugees throughout the region. Earlier this morning, I saw with my own eyes the devastating impact of the crisis in a refugee camp in Turkey, close to the Syrian border. The scale of the suffering of the Syrian people is clear. A cessation of violence is urgent.

The Syrian leadership should now seize the opportunity to make a fundamental change of course. It is essential that the next 48 hours bring visible signs of immediate and indisputable change in the military posture of the Government forces throughout the country, as called upon by the six-point plan, and that items (a), (b) and (c) of paragraph 2 of the six-point plan be fully implemented, in order to enable a cessation of armed violence on 12 April. We also urge the opposition to fulfil their commitments to the six-point plan and to give no excuse for the Government to renege on its commitments. The clear declarations coming from the opposition are encouraging in this respect.

I have been in constant contact with countries with influence. I appreciate the support they have given to the six-point plan and to my efforts. The unity of the international community, and in particular of the Security Council, is of vital importance to finding a political solution to the Syrian crisis. At this critical moment, I would be grateful if a united Council could register its deep concern at the state of the implementation of the Syrian Government's immediate obligations and impress upon the parties the importance of meeting the deadline of 12 April. The cessation of violence in all its forms is a first but essential step. It must not be delayed by new conditions. Violence must stop now.

On 12 April I hope to be able to give a more detailed assessment of the situation on the ground.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**
Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations
and the League of Arab States on the Syrian crisis